

## **Creating a Culture of Inclusion: Dismantling Discrimination and Hate 2025 – 2028**

### **Inclusion Queens Advisory Committee (IQ Committee) Recommendations**

The following recommendations are formulated with the intention of making Region of Queens Municipality (RQM) a complete 'Culture of Inclusion'; these recommendations create a pathway of work needed to achieve the end goal.

Some of the recommendations have started at RQM, but are listed here to encourage their continuation as part of a broader plan and the identification and delegation of staff.

The recommendations are broken into four sections:

1. In Progress
2. Short Term (1 – 2 years)
3. Medium Term (2 – 5 years)
4. Long Term (5+ years)

As the goal is to create a culture of inclusion, these recommendations have no end. The timelines presented are meant to be a logical timeline for implementation of the recommendations while anticipating these recommendations will become part of the organizational culture.

#### **In Progress**

The following are a list of actions that are taking place at RQM that help support anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion.

1. Continue to develop annual budgets that reflect Council's and the organization's commitment to anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion by approving recruitment for an Accessibility and Inclusion Coordinator for allocation of resources, allocating funds for small grant programs, and providing adequate human and financial resources to support the work or by giving priority to departmental specific needs.
2. Continue to build awareness for staff and community on anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion including internal communications planning and awareness of special days. Current communication methods for external awareness are utilization of social media posts, Queens Crown website and RQM's Special Purpose Flagpole; internal awareness is company emails, posters and word of mouth.

3. Continue to create and build on community partnerships to gather feedback and education with the goal of developing on-going relationships.
4. Redeploy community survey which will be ongoing with data pulls happening quarterly to regularly gauge community education improvement and acceptance of anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.
5. Integrate anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion considerations in all aspects of RQM strategic planning documents. This includes a diversity and inclusion plan for each department which includes recommendations from this report as part of the implementation phase.
6. Continue to diversify the job advertisement process at RQM to include diverse methods of advertising such as partnering with NS Works, AMANS and engaging first voice organizations such as Wasoqopa'q First Nation as well as other means of advertising to allow for a more diverse reach.
7. Continue implementing programs that encourage the hiring and advancement of underrepresented groups through succession planning or career trajectory programs, which includes partnerships with NS Works, or other socially focused employment enterprises.
8. Continue to integrate anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion into all new hire and onboarding processes with the understanding this integration process needs to continue throughout the employee's employment journey.
9. Continue fostering a culture where all employees are familiar and comfortable reporting incidents of disrespect, discrimination, racism and harassment in the workplace using Region of Queens Municipality's reporting procedure.
10. Continue supporting community programming that celebrates diversity and multiculturalism in the community.

### **Short Term**

It is recommended that the following take place over the next 12 – 24 months. These are foundational steps that focus on partnerships, education and data collection.

Many of these recommendations focus on internal processes:

1. Continue to offer staff and Council opportunities to build awareness on anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion issues through informal sessions such as lunch and learns as well as more formal training sessions where staff and Council attendance is encouraged.
2. Create a new set of Human Resources Hiring Policies and Practices for RQM to update practices to dismantle racism in the workplace and create a culture of inclusion and safety for all. Once complete, provide training sessions to hiring managers on the policies to remove any subjective interpretations.
3. Review and update existing RQM documentation to ensure the content is culturally responsive, gender-inclusive and meeting accessibility standards.
4. Management and Council determine collective motivations, goals and importance of this work to reach a consensus on the importance of the initiative for the organization, including adding budget.
5. Identify and steward relationships with relevant parties and potential partners within the community to help support and provide feedback on anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. Some relationships have started to develop and it is recommended that Mayor and Council strengthen these relationships by having regular meetings with Wasoqopa'q First Nation and Native Council of Nova Scotia, and develop and adopt a Reconciliation Action Plan.
6. Assess existing resources in municipal departments to identify how they can be leveraged to provide support to this Plan and determine any gaps.
7. Management plays a key role in supporting anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and highlighting their importance within their individual departments. To ensure their understanding, management participates in training for recruitment and hiring processes of under-represented individuals.
8. Include members of under-represented groups on committees and in attraction strategies so first-voice and lived experience is present.
9. Involve under-represented groups and social service organizations in conducting community infrastructure/assets review.

## **Medium Term**

It is recommended that the following take place in two to five years. These recommendations are focused on internal processes that are contingent upon the completion of the short-term recommendations as well as community engagement.

1. Develop programs to encourage the election of under-represented candidates for municipal office.
2. Continue community engagement by:
  - Conducting a needs assessment in various communities to assess areas of exclusion and barriers of accessing municipal services.
  - Consult with community organizations and service providers. This can be done with applicable Directors, Councillors and the Accessibility and Inclusion Coordinator.
  - Inviting elders, key community representatives and leaders to public meetings of Council.
  - When needed, organizing focus groups, town hall meetings or Council meetings in various locations in Queens County to gather feedback from under-represented groups and residents in other parts of the county.
  - Examining municipal external communication methods to ensure that all groups have equitable access to municipal information as directed in the Accessibility Directorate Plan Language Guide.

## **Long Term**

These recommendations are focused on the long term, over the next five years. These actions build on the community outreach and shift in Region of Queens Municipality's organizational culture. With that outreach and organizational shift established, the Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategy begins to allow for a social and economic growth in the communities of Queens County, principally through resident attraction/retention and entrepreneurship/business growth. All of the recommendations below have areas for input from each department at RQM.

1. Work with community organizations, business organizations and other social services to determine areas where collaboration can be done to work in more welcome and inclusive community projects in Queens County.

2. Create and implement a Region of Queens Resident Attraction Strategy and a Welcoming Communities Plan, which could include collaboration with Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), Nova Scotia Department of Immigration, YREACH.
3. Encourage the creation of a Local Immigration Partnership or a Welcoming and Inclusive Communities Committee.
4. Communicate opportunities for anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion training and initiatives to the business community, community groups and residents of Queens County.
5. Work with other levels of government and business community to focus on business attraction and retention to the area.

## **Conclusion**

The Dismantling Racism and Hate Act outlines the provincial government's approach to addressing inequity, systemic hate and racism. It required municipalities to develop and adopt equity and anti-racism plans by April 1, 2025. This work requires municipalities to undergo a planning process to identify actions that will promote equity and antiracism by considering the needs of under-represented and underserved communities.

Anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion planning, consultations and training have been underway intermittently at Region of Queens Municipality since 2020.

Measuring the culture of diversity and inclusion at RQM serves as a starting point in a journey to a more inclusive Region as a place to live, work and play.

The recommendations in this Plan require many relevant parties to work together in order for them to be implemented, and it all starts with municipal leadership and adequately resourced staff.

Though the recommendations reference an 'end goal' in this work, work on inclusion is ongoing work that has no foreseeable end date or completion, but requires a commitment to lifelong learning and intentional action.